What is pathological demand avoidance (PDA)?

What is demand avoidance?



'Demand avoidance' involves not being able to do certain things at certain times, either for yourself or others, and the use of techniques to avoid these things.

It's a natural human trait – avoiding demands is something we all do to different degrees and for different reasons.

When it occurs to an extreme extent, it may be that it relates to poor physical or mental health, personality development or developmental conditions. So, it's important to understand that a PDA profile of autism may not always be the explanation for demand avoidant presentations.

Much like those with Autism, children and young people with Demand Avoidant features may also avoid demands or situations that trigger anxiety or sensory overload, disrupt routines, involve transitioning from one activity to another, and activities/events that they don't see the point of or have any interest in.

They may refuse, withdraw, 'shutdown' or escape in order to avoid these things.

In addition, many everyday demands are avoided simply because they are demands. The very fact that there's an expectation that something should be done can result in an inability to do it. The expectation might be from other people or it may be something internal. Some people explain that it's the expectation which leads to a feeling of a lack of control (even though it may be something they want to do), then anxiety increases, and panic can set in.

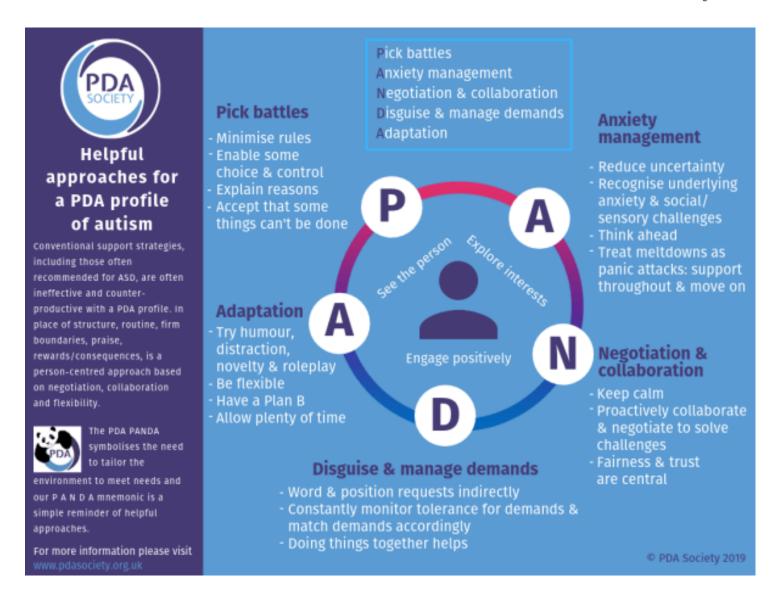
Demands will be perceived differently by different individuals, and response to demands may also be variable but once you begin to look at life in terms of demands you can see how all pervasive they are and you can see how difficult things might be for someone with a PDA profile of autism.

To find out more about PDA;

https://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/pda.aspx

https://www.pdasociety.org.uk/what-is-pda-menu/





Many more generic autism resources and approaches – such as social stories, books, games, activities, computer games and apps – may also be helpful, but may require some creative adaption, or a more indirect form of implementation to be effective with a young person with a PDA profile of Autism.

Similarly, these approaches can be helpful with other presentations/conditions as well as with a PDA profile of autism – they may be beneficial for autistic and non-autistic people at times of heightened emotional states or extreme anxiety, or for times of extreme demand avoidance regardless of the underlying cause.

